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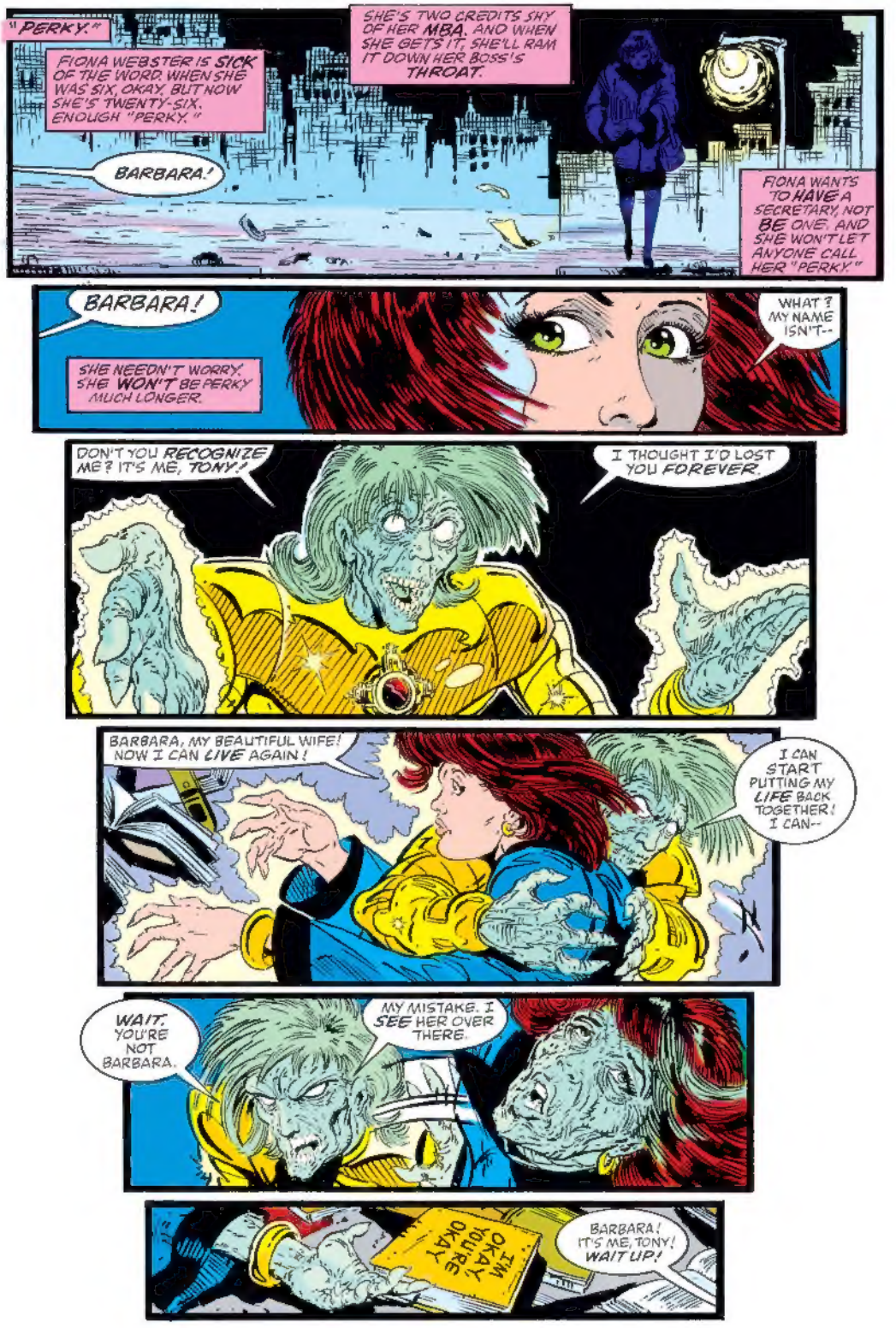
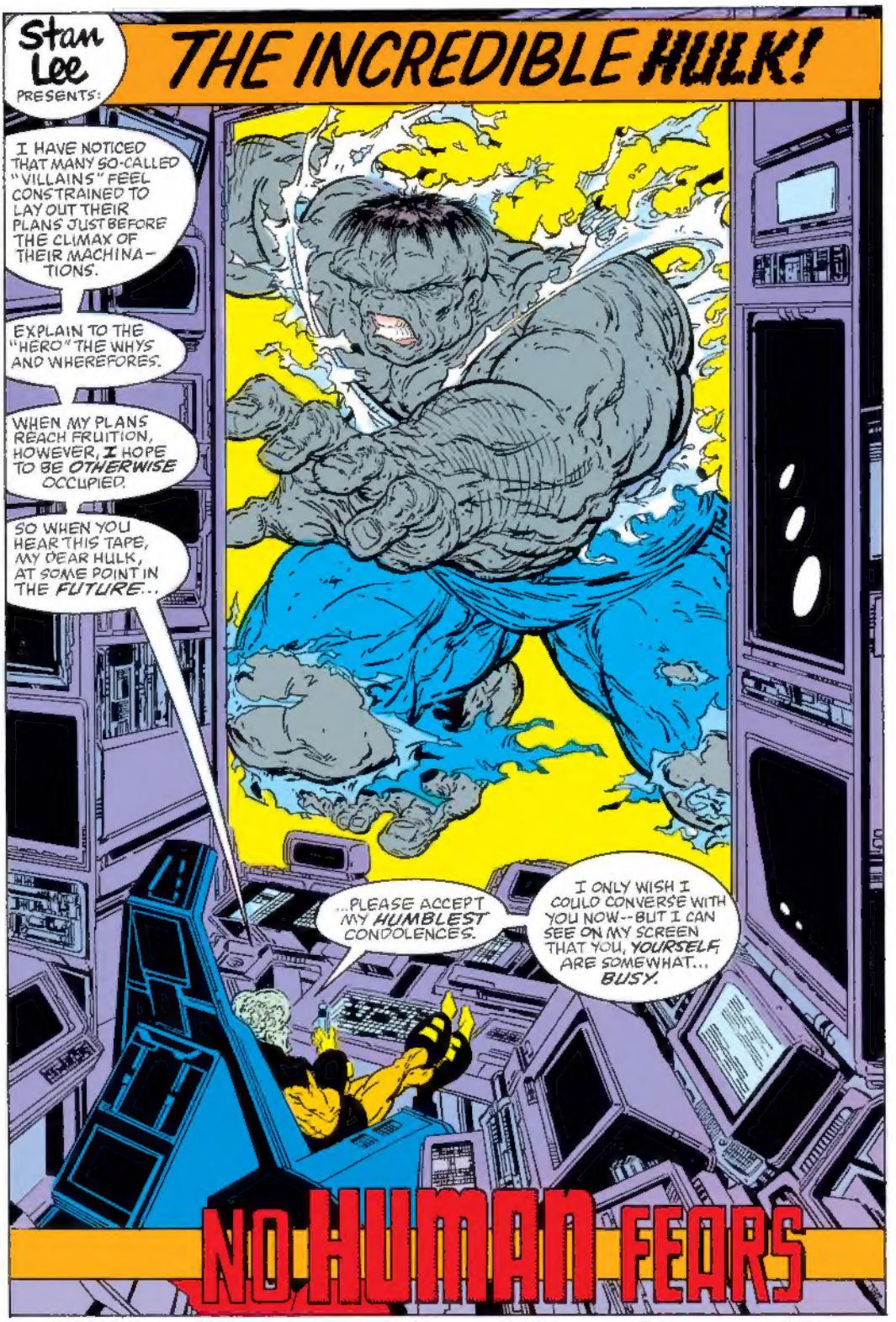
AUTHORITY

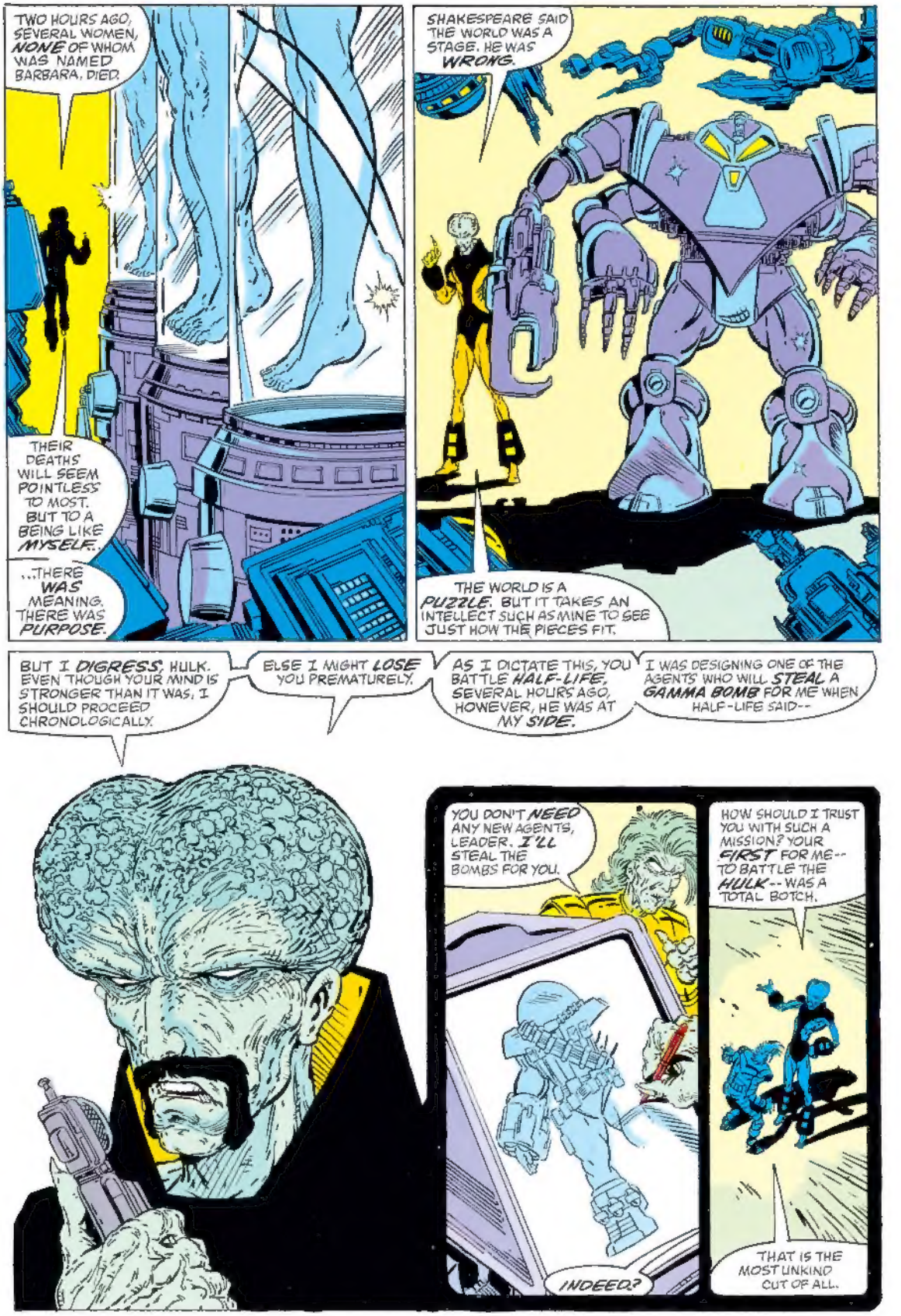
THE INCREDIBLE HULK®

McFARLANE

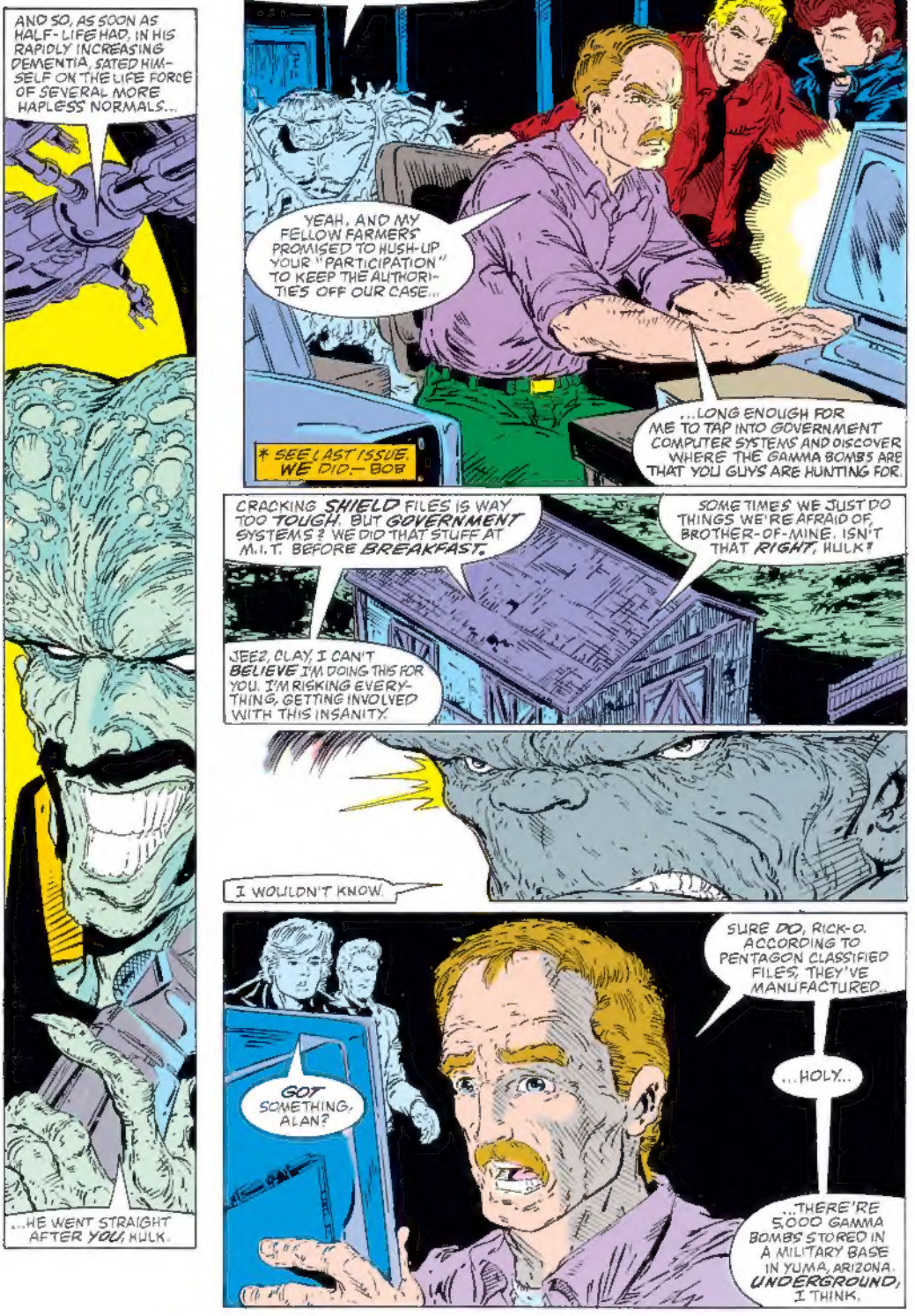

"PERKY."
FIONA WEBSTER IS SICK OF THE WORD. WHEN SHE WAS SIX, OKAY, BUT NOW SHE'S TWENTY-SIX. ENOUGH "PERKY."
SHE'S TWO CREDITS SHY OF HER MBA. AND WHEN SHE GETS IT, SHE'LL RAM IT DOWN HER BOSS'S THROAT.
BARBARA!
FIONA WANTS TO HAVE A SECRETARY, NOT BE ONE. AND SHE WON'T LET ANYONE CALL HER "PERKY."
BARBARA!
SHE NEEDN'T WORRY. SHE WON'T BE PERKY MUCH LONGER.
WHAT? MY NAME ISN'T--
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? IT'S ME, TONY!
I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU FOREVER.
BARBARA, MY BEAUTIFUL WIFE! NOW I CAN LIVE AGAIN!
I CAN START PUTTING MY LIFE BACK TOGETHER! I CAN--
WAIT. YOU'RE NOT BARBARA.
MY MISTAKE. I SEE HER OVER THERE.
I'M OKAY YOU'RE OKAY
BARBARA! IT'S ME, TONY! WAIT UP!

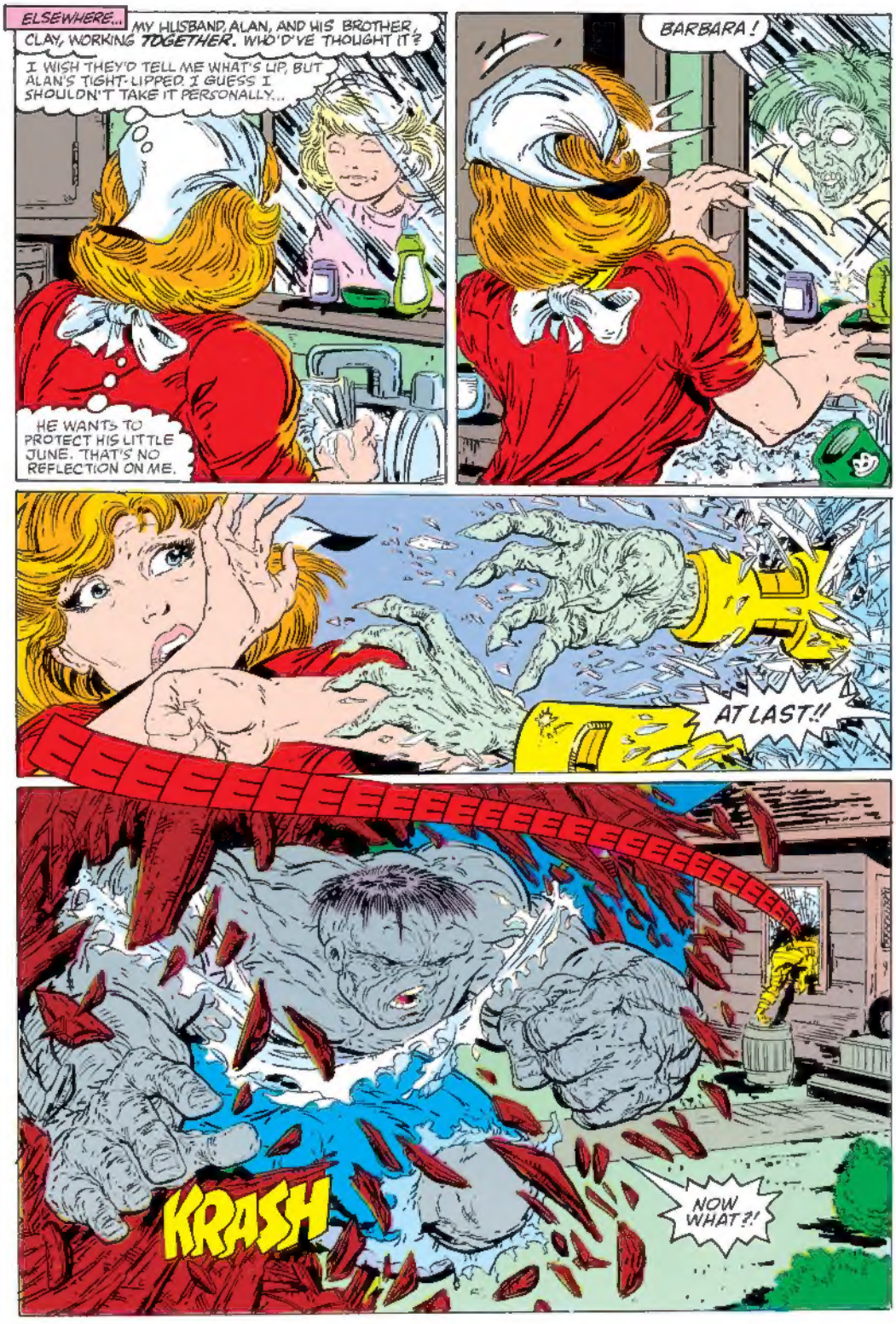

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
THE INCREDIBLE HULK!
I HAVE NOTICED THAT MANY SO-CALLED "VILLAINS" FEEL CONSTRAINED TO LAY OUT THEIR PLANS JUST BEFORE THE CLIMAX OF THEIR MACHINA-TIONS.
EXPLAIN TO THE "HERO" THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES.
WHEN MY PLANS REACH FRUITION, HOWEVER, I HOPE TO BE OTHERWISE OCCUPIED.
SO WHEN YOU HEAR THIS TAPE, MY DEAR HULK, AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE...
...PLEASE ACCEPT MY HUMBLEST CONDOLENCES.
I ONLY WISH I COULD CONVERSE WITH YOU NOW--BUT I CAN SEE ON MY SCREEN THAT YOU, YOURSELF, ARE SOMEWHAT... BUSY.
NO HUMAN FEARS

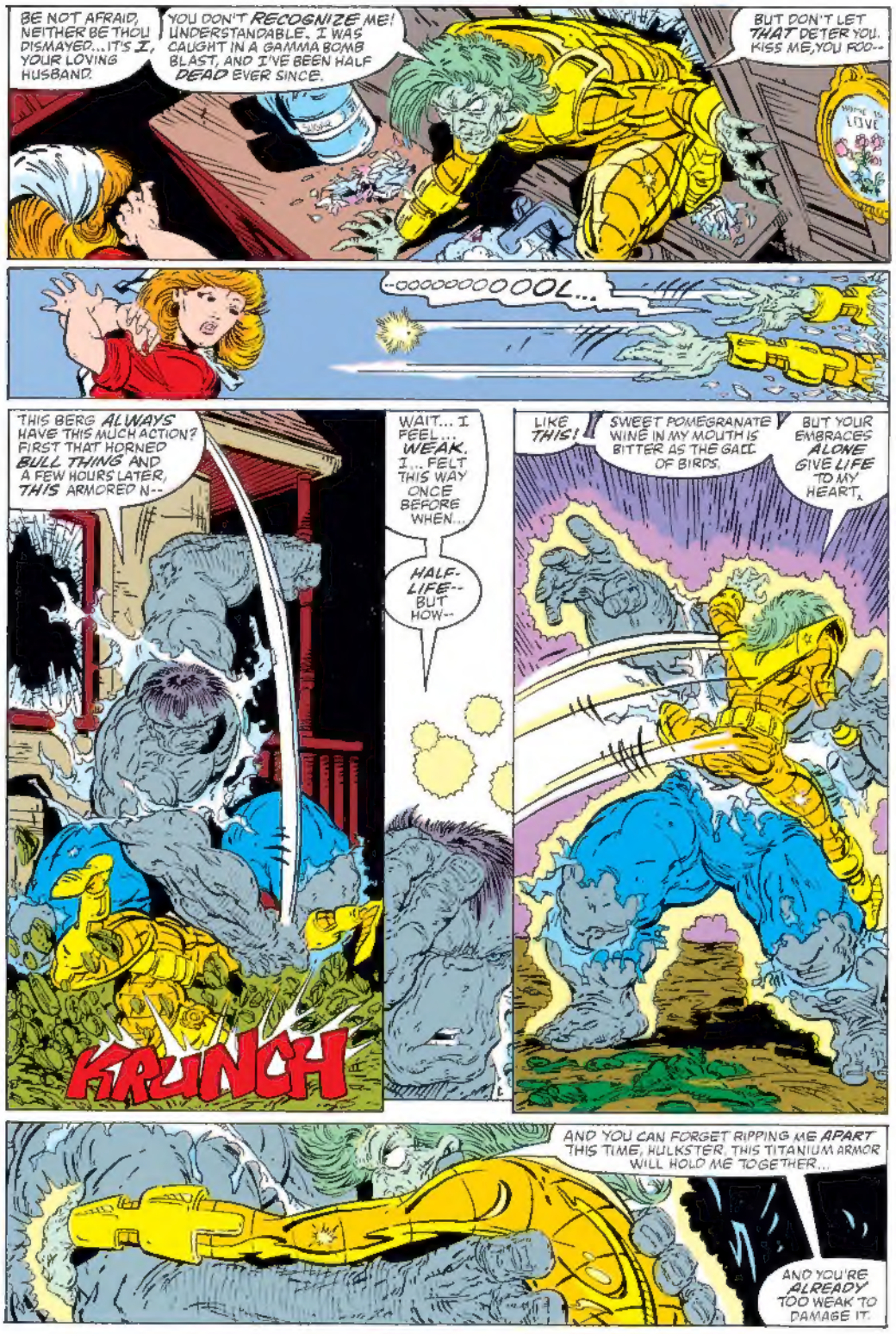
PETER DAVID Story | TODD McFARLANE Art | RICK PARKER Lettering | PETRA SCOTESE Color | BOB HARRAS Editor | TOM DEFALCO Chief

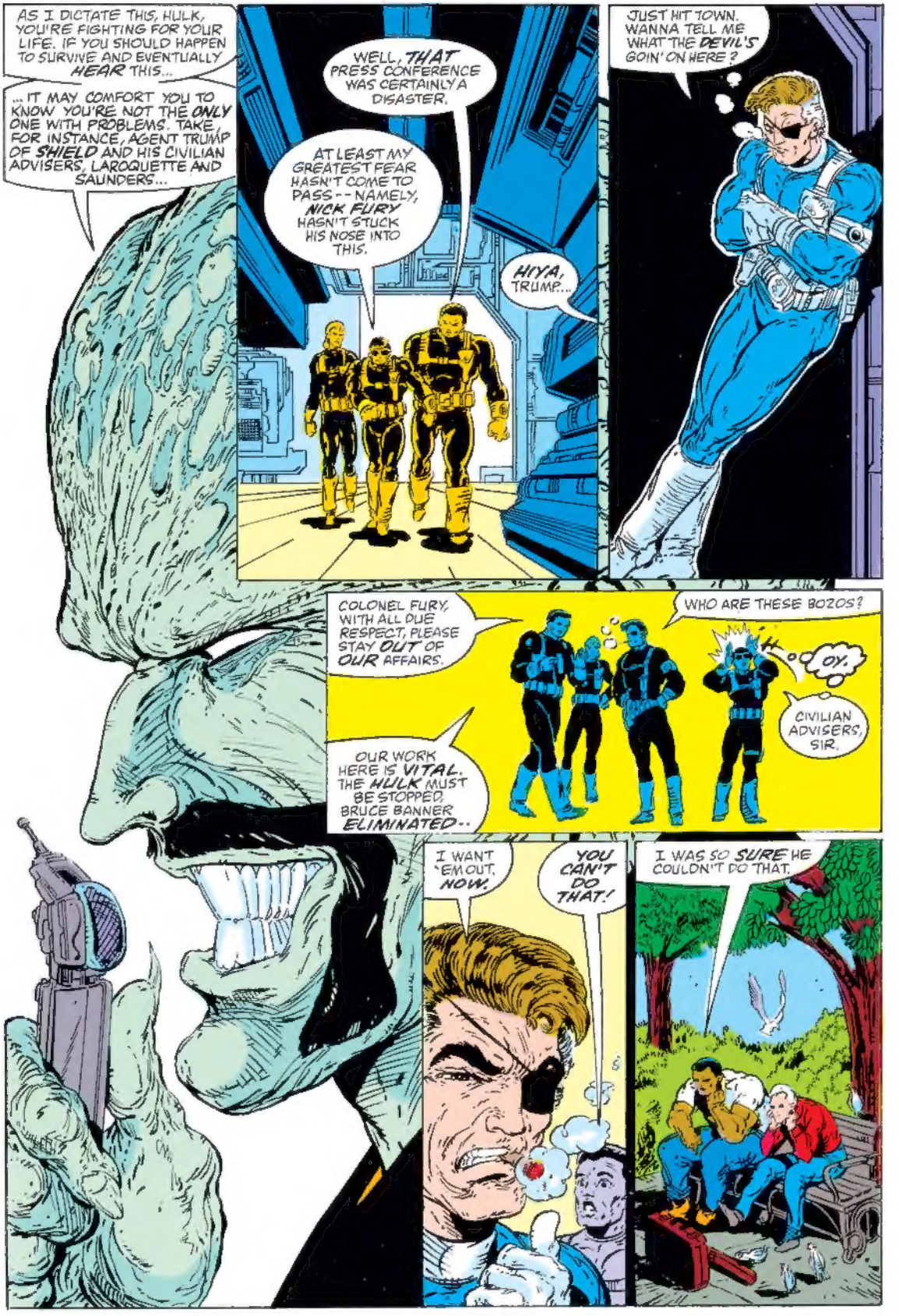

TWO HOURS AGO, SEVERAL WOMEN, NONE OF WHOM WAS NAMED BARBARA, DIED.
THEIR DEATHS WILL SEEM POINTLESS TO MOST. BUT TO A BEING LIKE MYSELF...
...THERE WAS MEANING. THERE WAS PURPOSE.
SHAKESPEARE SAID THE WORLD WAS A STAGE. HE WAS WRONG.
THE WORLD IS A PUZZLE. BUT IT TAKES AN INTELLECT SUCH AS MINE TO SEE JUST HOW THE PIECES FIT.
BUT I DIGRESS, HULK. EVEN THOUGH YOUR MIND IS STRONGER THAN IT WAS, I SHOULD PROCEED CHRONOLOGICALLY.
ELSE I MIGHT LOSE YOU PREMATURELY.
AS I DICTATE THIS, YOU BATTLE HALF-LIFE, SEVERAL HOURS AGO, HOWEVER, HE WAS AT MY SIDE.
I WAS DESIGNING ONE OF THE AGENTS WHO WILL STEAL A GAMMA BOMB FOR ME WHEN HALF-LIFE SAID--
YOU DON'T NEED ANY NEW AGENTS, LEADER. I'LL STEAL THE BOMBS FOR YOU.
INDEED?
HOW SHOULD I TRUST YOU WITH SUCH A MISSION? YOUR FIRST FOR ME-- TO BATTLE THE HULK-- WAS A TOTAL BOTCH.
THAT IS THE MOST UNKIND CUT OF ALL.

"HIS PLEAS WERE SO SINCERE (AND ANNOYING) THAT EVENTUALLY I TOOK PITY ON HIM. I WOULD GIVE HIM ONE MORE CHANCE--IF HE COULD DESTROY THE HULK, THEN HE COULD STEAL THE BOMBS FOR ME. IF NOTHING ELSE, IT SEEMED A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS THIS "NEW" HULK IN ACTION. I MOUNTED A SMALL CAMERA ON HALF-LIFE'S ARMORED CHEST FOR A LIVE--OR HALF-LIVE--FEED.
ATTACH WHATEVER YOU WANT, LEADER. I'M NOT AFRAID. AFTER ALL, WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO FEAR?
WIZ
YOU CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE.
"HE THEN STEPPED INTO MY MATTER TRANSPORTER--THE SAME DEVICE THAT SAVED MY LIFE NOT LONG AGO--AND I SENT HIM ON HIS WAY.
ZZZZAK
HOW DID I KNOW WHERE YOU WERE, HULK? I'M SURE THAT'S CROSSED YOUR "MIND."
BY THE TIME YOU HEAR THIS, IT WON'T MATTER.
WHEN I ABSORBED THE GAMMA RADIATION OUT OF RICK JONES', I ACCIDENTALLY ESTABLISHED A PSYCHIC LINK WITH HIM, JUST BEFORE THE CAVE BLEW UP AND SEPARATED US! I CAN'T CONTROL HIM, AS I CAN OTHERS. BUT I KNOW EVERYTHING HE KNOWS--HIS WHEREABOUTS, PLANS...
... ALSO HOW TO PLAY ACOUSTIC GUITAR AND HARMONICA, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.
*SEE ISSUE #232.-BOB

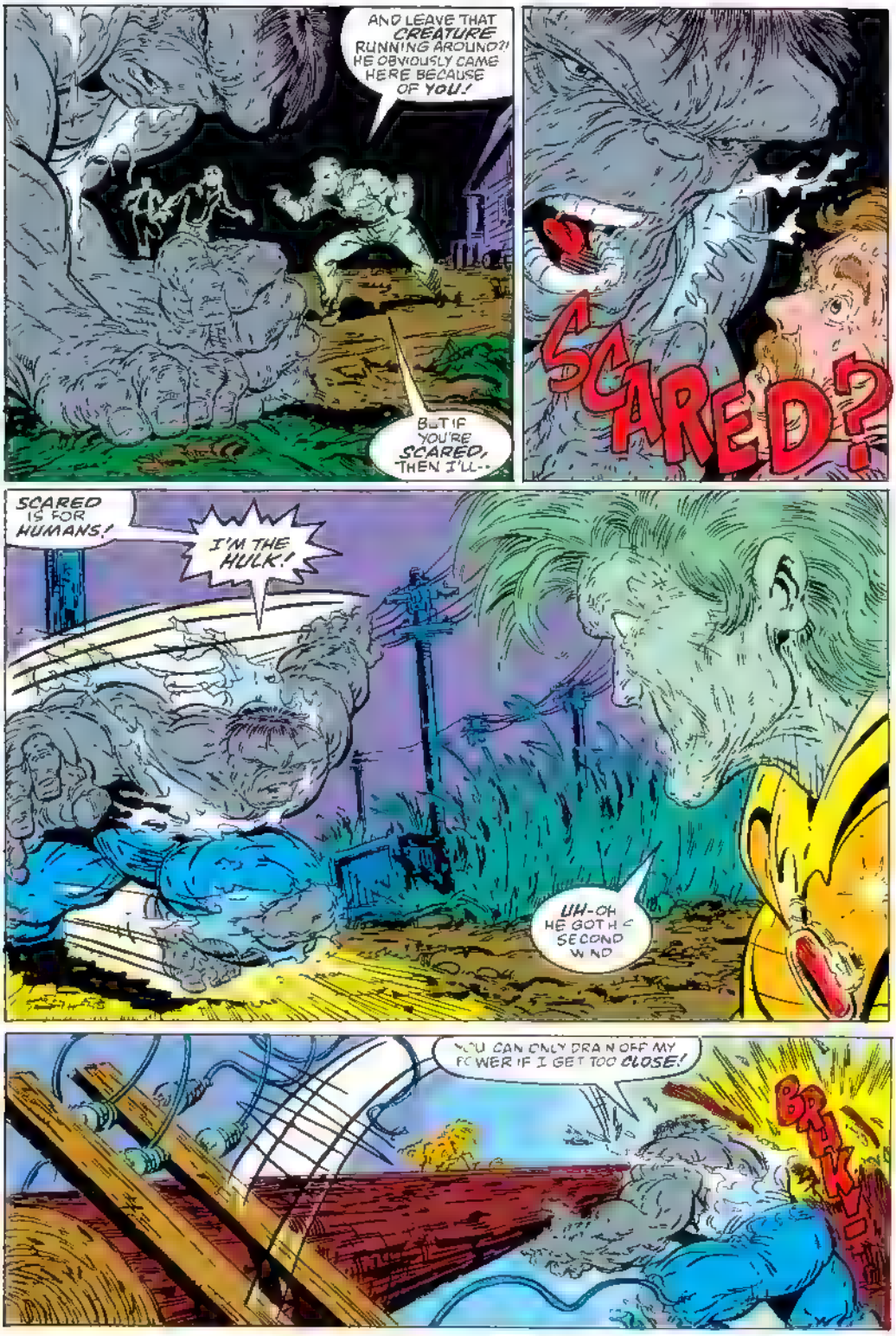

AND SO, AS SOON AS HALF-LIFE HAD, IN HIS RAPIDLY INCREASING DEMENTIA, SATED HIMSELF ON THE LIFE FORCE OF SEVERAL MORE HAPLESS NORMALS...
...HE WENT STRAIGHT AFTER YOU, HULK.
SO THEY GOT THAT MAN-BULL THING IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY?*
YEAH, AND MY FELLOW FARMERS PROMISED TO HUSH-UP YOUR "PARTICIPATION" TO KEEP THE AUTHORITIES OFF OUR CASE...
* SEE LAST ISSUE. WE DID.—BOB
...LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO TAP INTO GOVERNMENT COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND DISCOVER WHERE THE GAMMA BOMBS ARE THAT YOU GUYS ARE HUNTING FOR.
CRACKING SHIELD FILES IS WAY TOO TOUGH. BUT GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS? WE DID THAT STUFF AT M.I.T. BEFORE BREAKFAST.
SOMETIMES WE JUST DO THINGS WE'RE AFRAID OF, BROTHER-OF-MINE. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, HULK?
JEEZ, CLAY, I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS FOR YOU. I'M RISKING EVERYTHING, GETTING INVOLVED WITH THIS INSANITY.
I WOULDN'T KNOW.
GOT SOMETHING, ALAN?
SURE DO, RICK-O. ACCORDING TO PENTAGON CLASSIFIED FILES, THEY'VE MANUFACTURED...
...HOLY...
...THERE'RE 5,000 GAMMA BOMBS STORED IN A MILITARY BASE IN YUMA, ARIZONA. UNDERGROUND, I THINK.

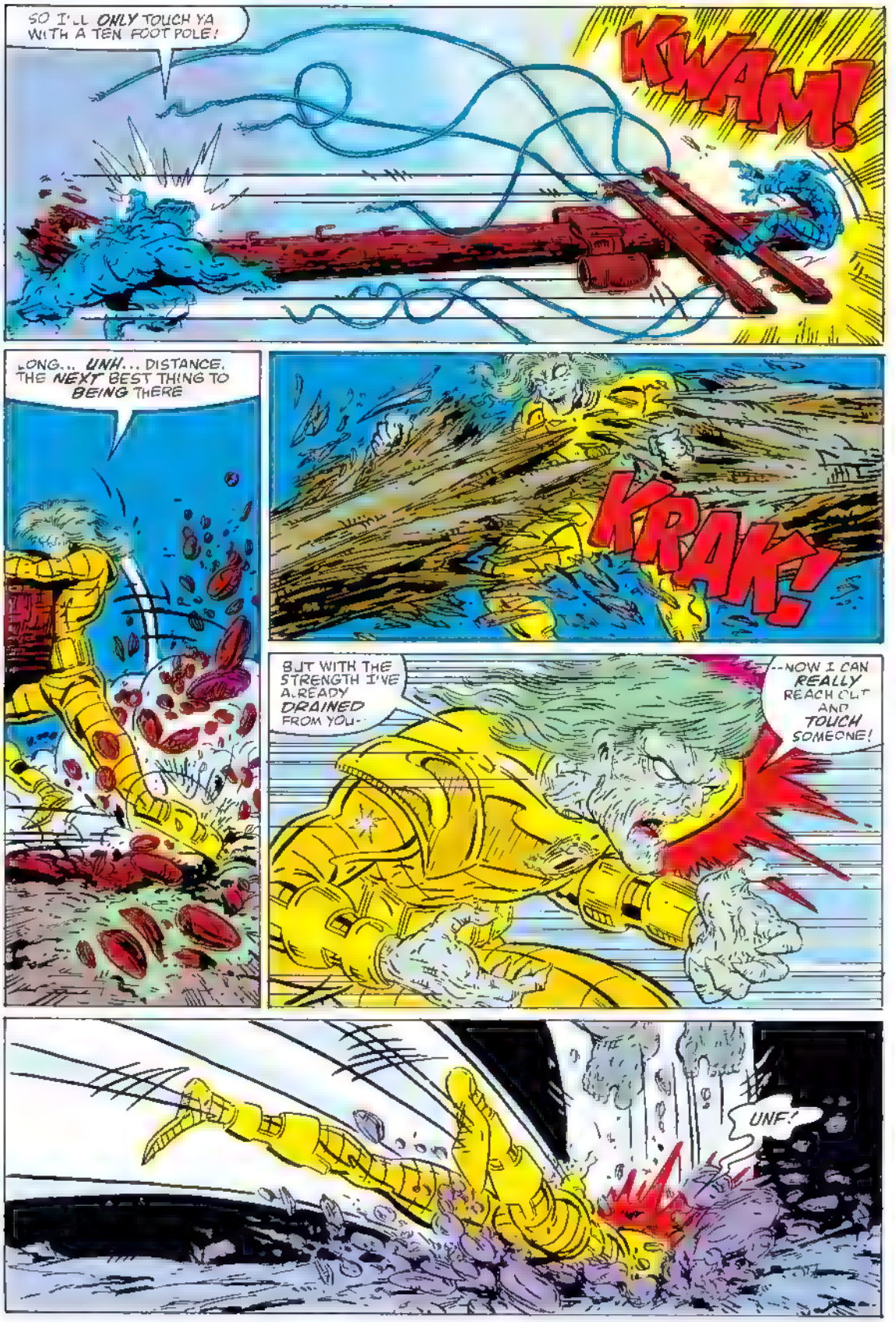

ELSEWHERE...
MY HUSBAND, ALAN, AND HIS BROTHER, CLAY, WORKING TOGETHER. WHO'D'VE THOUGHT IT?
I WISH THEY'D TELL ME WHAT'S UP, BUT ALAN'S TIGHT-LIPPED. I GUESS I SHOULDN'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY...
HE WANTS TO PROTECT HIS LITTLE JUNE. THAT'S NO REFLECTION ON ME.
BARBARA!
AT LAST!!
EEEE

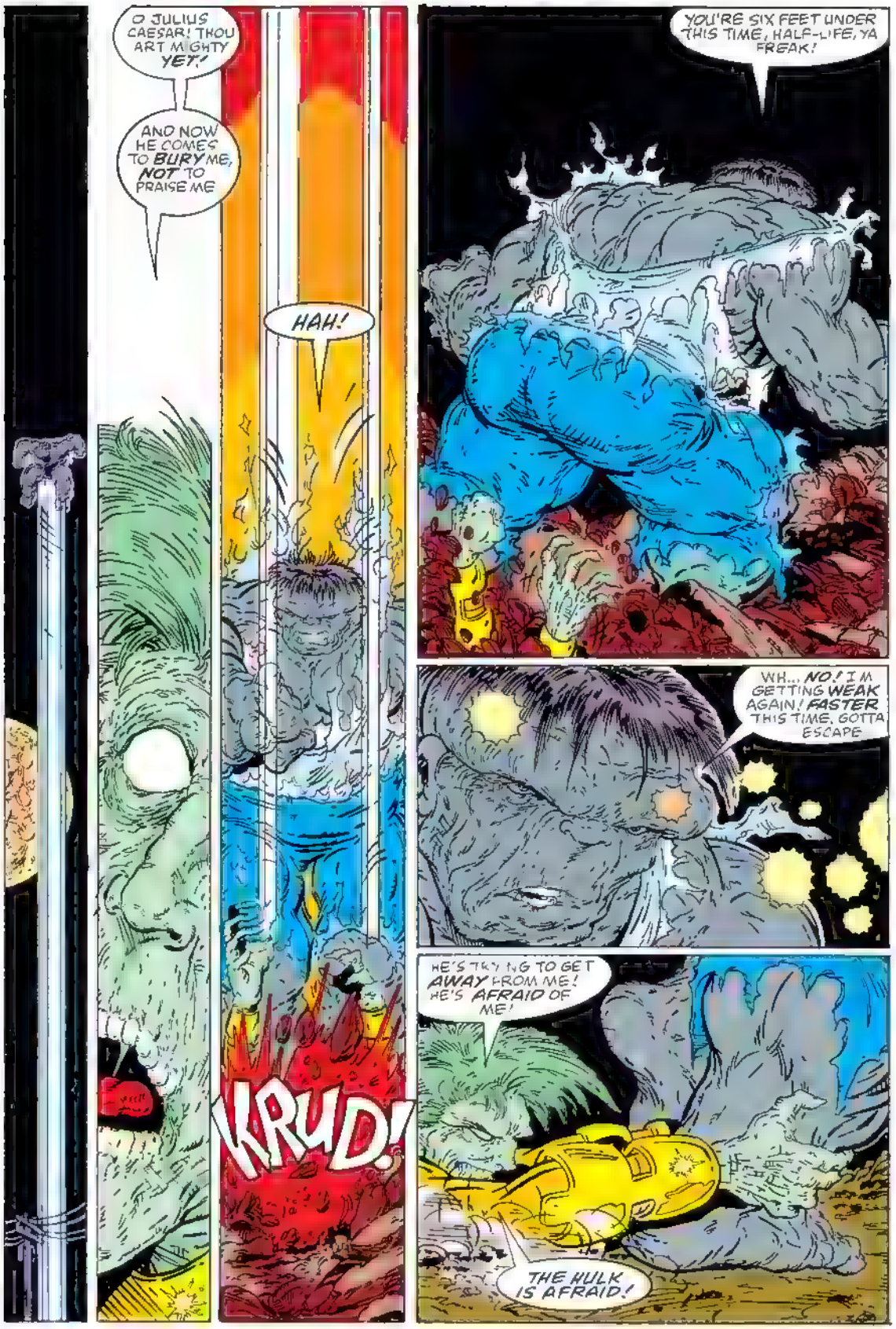

BE NOT AFRAID, NEITHER BE THOU DISMAYED... IT'S I, YOUR LOVING HUSBAND.
YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME! UNDERSTANDABLE. I WAS CAUGHT IN A GAMMA BOMB BLAST, AND I'VE BEEN HALF DEAD EVER SINCE.
BUT DON'T LET THAT DETER YOU. KISS ME, YOU FOO--
WITH LOVE
--OOOOOOOOOOL...
THIS BERG ALWAYS HAVE THIS MUCH ACTION? FIRST THAT HORNED BULL THING AND A FEW HOURS LATER, THIS ARMORED N--
KRUNCH
WAIT... I FEEL... WEAK. I... FELT THIS WAY ONCE BEFORE WHEN...
HALF-LIFE-- BUT HOW--
LIKE THIS!
SWEET POMEGRANATE WINE IN MY MOUTH IS BITTER AS THE GALL OF BIRDS.
BUT YOUR EMBRACES ALONE GIVE LIFE TO MY HEART.
AND YOU CAN FORGET RIPPING ME APART THIS TIME, HULKSTER. THIS TITANIUM ARMOR WILL HOLD ME TOGETHER...
AND YOU'RE ALREADY TOO WEAK TO DAMAGE IT.


AS I DICTATE THIS, HULK, YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE. IF YOU SHOULD HAPPEN TO SURVIVE AND EVENTUALLY HEAR THIS...
...IT MAY COMFORT YOU TO KNOW YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH PROBLEMS. TAKE, FOR INSTANCE, AGENT TRUMP OF SHIELD AND HIS CIVILIAN ADVISERS, LAROQUETTE AND SAUNDERS...
WELL, THAT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS CERTAINLY A DISASTER.
AT LEAST MY GREATEST FEAR HASN'T COME TO PASS--NAMELY, NICK FURY HASN'T STUCK HIS NOSE INTO THIS.
HIYA, TRUMP...
JUST HIT TOWN. WANNA TELL ME WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOIN' ON HERE?
COLONEL FURY, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, PLEASE STAY OUT OF OUR AFFAIRS.
OUR WORK HERE IS VITAL. THE HULK MUST BE STOPPED, BRUCE BANNER ELIMINATED..
WHO ARE THESE BOZOS?
OY.
CIVILIAN ADVISERS, SIR.
I WANT 'EM OUT. NOW.
YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
I WAS SO SURE HE COULDN'T DO THAT.

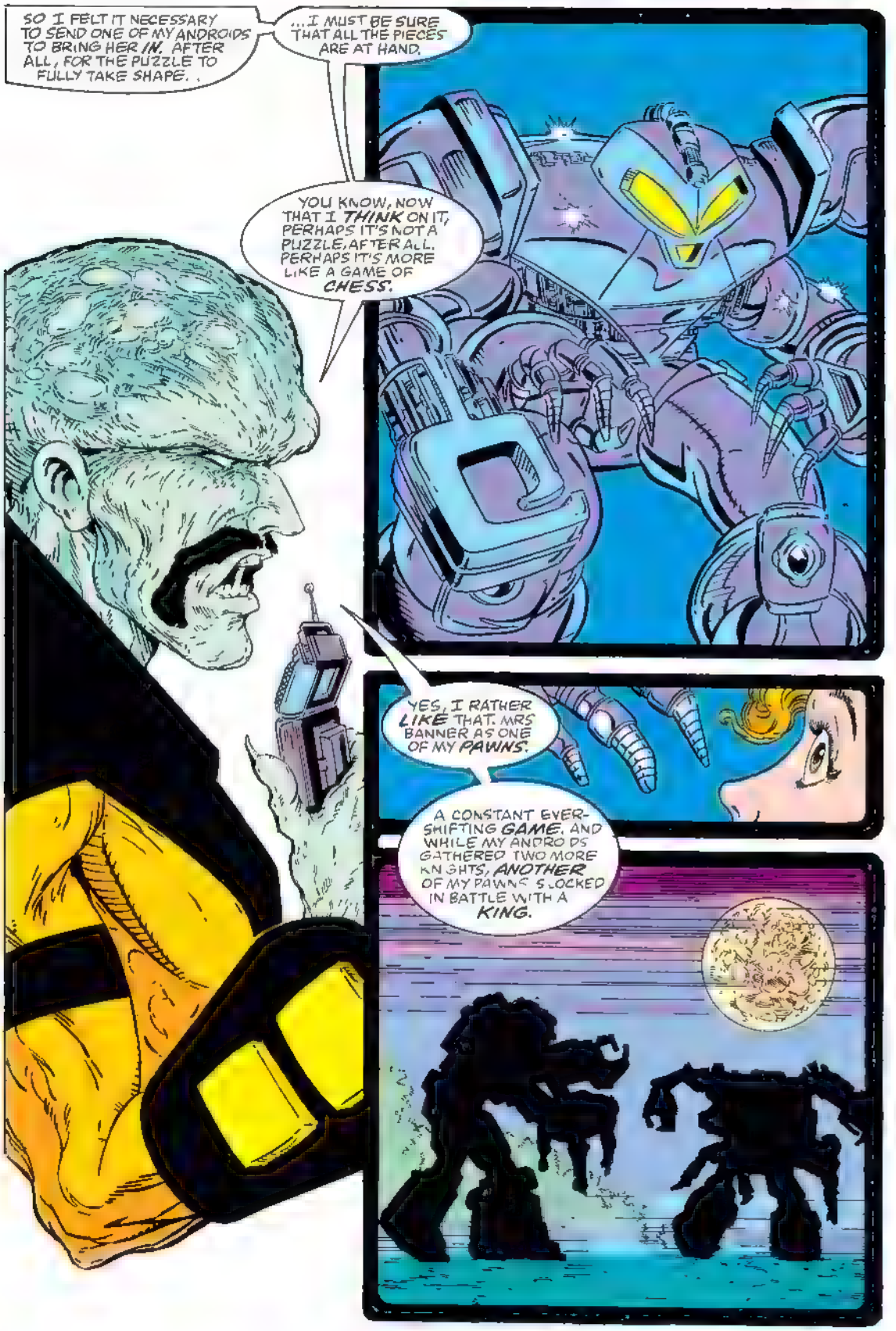
YOU'RE GOING TO DIE, HULK! DIE, AS I ABSORB THE RADIATION FROM YOU!
DIE, AND I'LL LIVE!
KRANG!
I STUNNED HIM, HULK! YANK 'IM LOOSE!
WHEEEEEE!
HE... MAKES ME WEAK... CAN'T BE WEAK...
STRENGTH IS... ALL I GOT. I'LL FIGHT ANYBODY WHO'S STRONG, BUT NOT SOMEONE WHO MAKES ME WEAK.
WE KNOW WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW. LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.


AND LEAVE THAT CREATURE RUNNING AROUND?! HE OBVIOUSLY CAME HERE BECAUSE OF YOU!
BUT IF YOU'RE SCARED, THEN I'LL--
SCARED?
SCARED IS FOR HUMANS!
I'M THE HULK!
UH-OH HE GOT HIS SECOND WIND
YOU CAN ONLY DRAIN OFF MY POWER IF I GET TOO CLOSE!
BRIKK!


SO I'LL ONLY TOUCH YA WITH A TEN FOOT POLE!
KWAM!
LONG... UNH... DISTANCE, THE NEXT BEST THING TO BEING THERE
KRAK!
BUT WITH THE STRENGTH I'VE ALREADY DRAINED FROM YOU--
--NOW I CAN REALLY REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE!
UNF!


O JULIUS CAESAR! THOU ART MIGHTY YET!
AND NOW HE COMES TO BURY ME, NOT TO PRAISE ME
HAH!
KRUD!
YOU'RE SIX FEET UNDER THIS TIME, HALF-LIFE, YA FREAK!
WH... NO! I M GETTING WEAK AGAIN! FASTER THIS TIME, GOTTA ESCAPE
HE'S TRY NG TO GET AWAY FROM ME! HE'S AFRAID OF ME!
THE HULK IS AFRAID!

I DO NOT EXPECT HALF-LIFE TO WIN HE'S FAR TOO SINGLE-MINDED--FANTASIZING THAT HE CAN SOMEDAY RETURN TO HIS SIMPLE LIFE AS A HUMBLE ENGLISH PROFESSOR HE HAS A PLAN, BUT THAT'S ALL.
I DO NOT HAVE A PLAN. I HAVE MANY PLANS, EACH BEING CAREFULLY CULTIVATED AND DEVELOPED. SHOULD ONE NOT WORK OUT, ANOTHER CAN TAKE ITS PLACE
SO MANY PIECES IN THE PUZZLE BETTY BANNER, FOR EXAMPLE. THE DEPARTED WIFE OF BRUCE BANNER, A.K.A. THE HULK
" THROUGH MY ASSORTED OPERATIVES IN MAJOR CITIES I'VE KEPT TRACK OF HER
", ABETTED BY MY COMPUTER KEEPING RECORDS OF WHEN AND WHERE SHE USES HER CHARGE CARDS
I'VE RECENTLY DECIDED, HOWEVER THAT'S IT. TIME TO BRING MRS. BANNER TO ME. ONE OPERATIVE LAMENTED THAT SHE DID NOT APPEAR QUITE WELL.


SO I FELT IT NECESSARY TO SEND ONE OF MY ANDROIDS TO BRING HER IN. AFTER ALL, FOR THE PUZZLE TO FULLY TAKE SHAPE. .
...I MUST BE SURE THAT ALL THE PIECES ARE AT HAND.
YOU KNOW, NOW THAT I THINK ON IT, PERHAPS IT'S NOT A PUZZLE, AFTER ALL. PERHAPS IT'S MORE LIKE A GAME OF CHESS.
YES, I RATHER LIKE THAT. MRS BANNER AS ONE OF MY PAWNS.
A CONSTANT EVER-SHIFTING GAME. AND WHILE MY ANDROIDS GATHERED TWO MORE KNIGHTS, ANOTHER OF MY PAWNS LOCKED IN BATTLE WITH A KING.

GREAT CAESAR *FELL!* O! WHAT A FALL WAS THERE, MY COUNTRYMEN!

LOOK AT YOU, HULK! SO WEAK YOU CAN'T EVEN STAND!

AND *ME!* SO POWERFUL I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO *TOUCH* YOU ANYMORE TO TAKE YOUR POWER

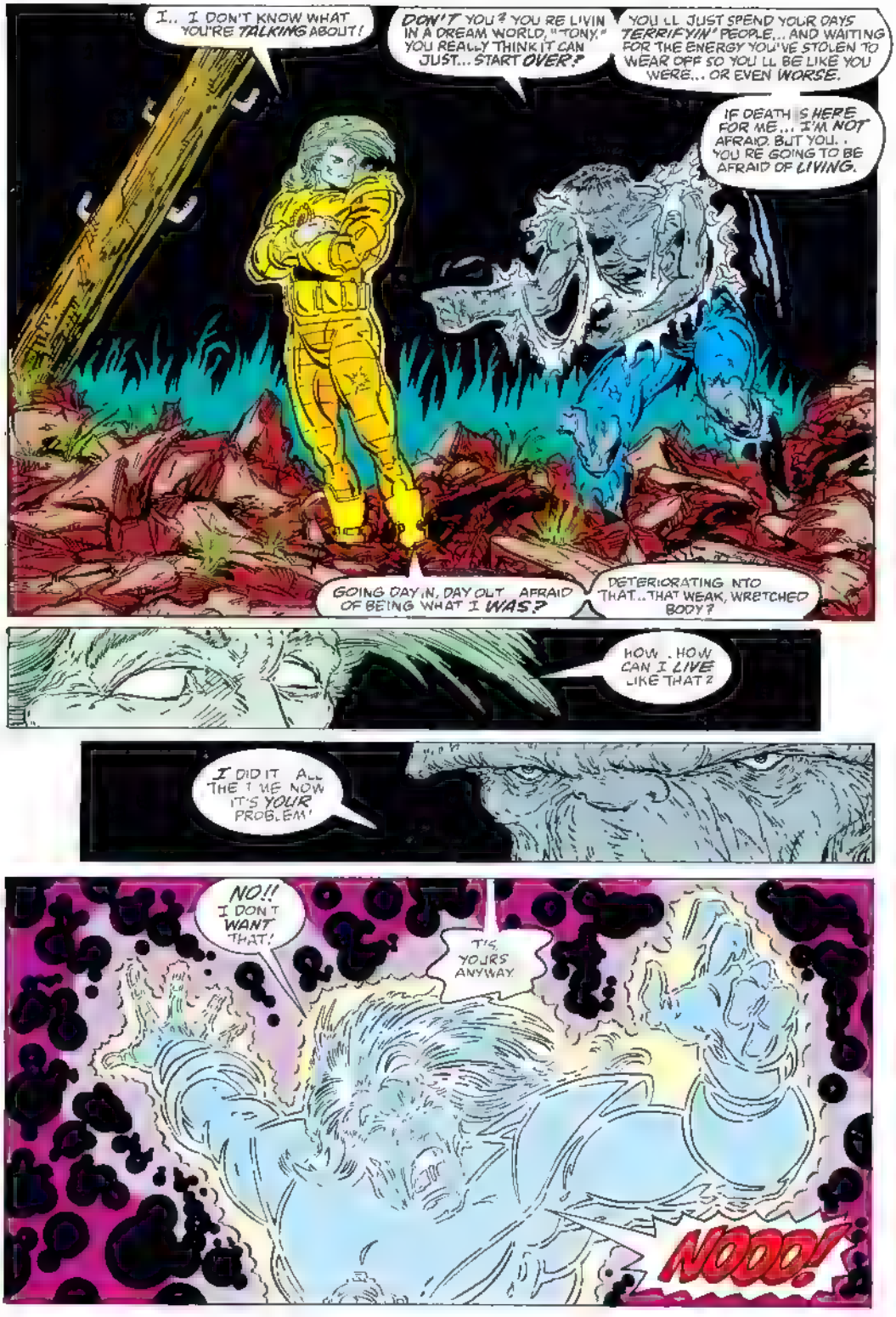
HE'S PU..ING MY STRENGTH FROM ME SO *FAST*... FASTER THAN MY BODY CAN REPLACE THE CELLS

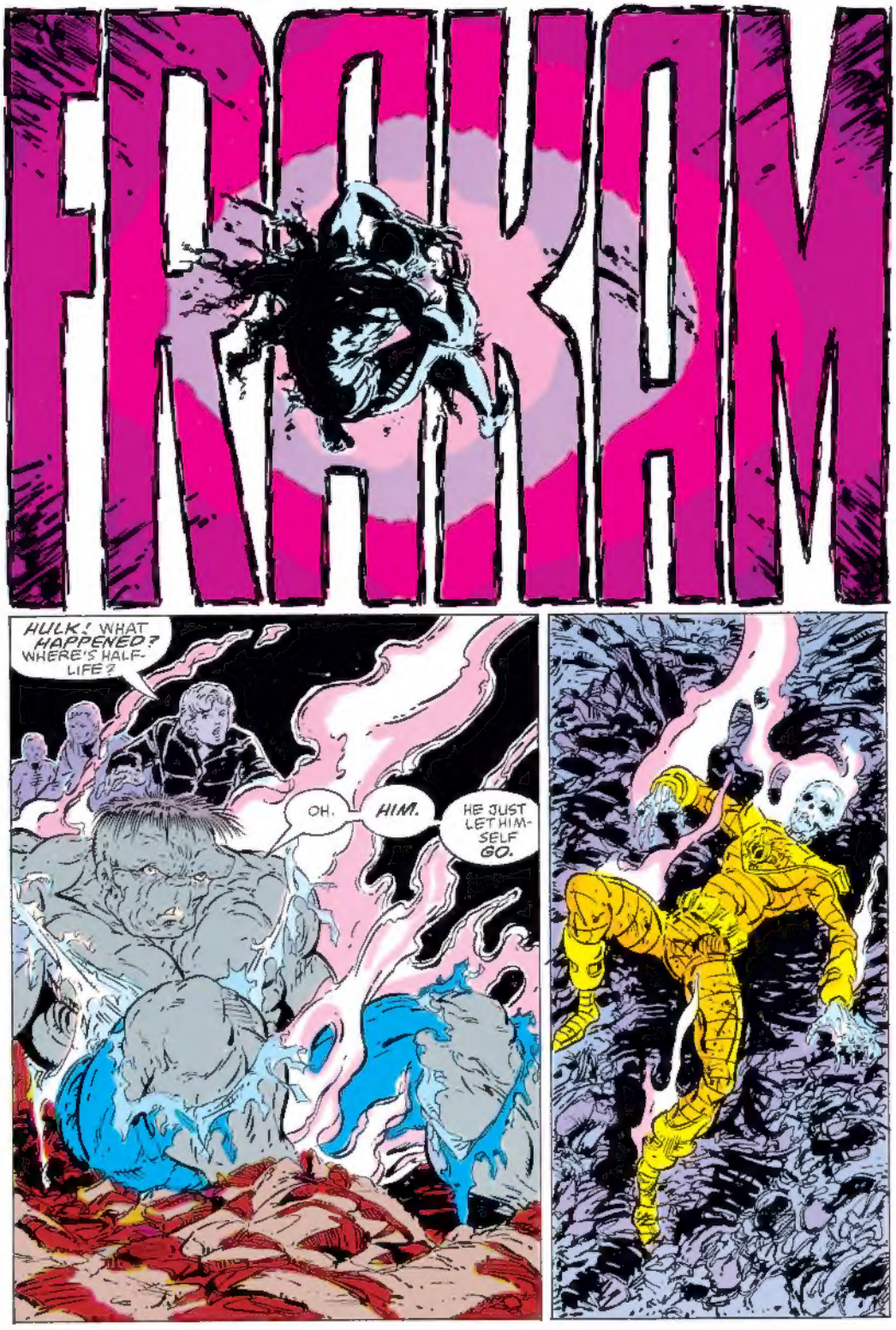
SO. *THIS* IS WHAT IT'S LIKE, TO BE WEAK.

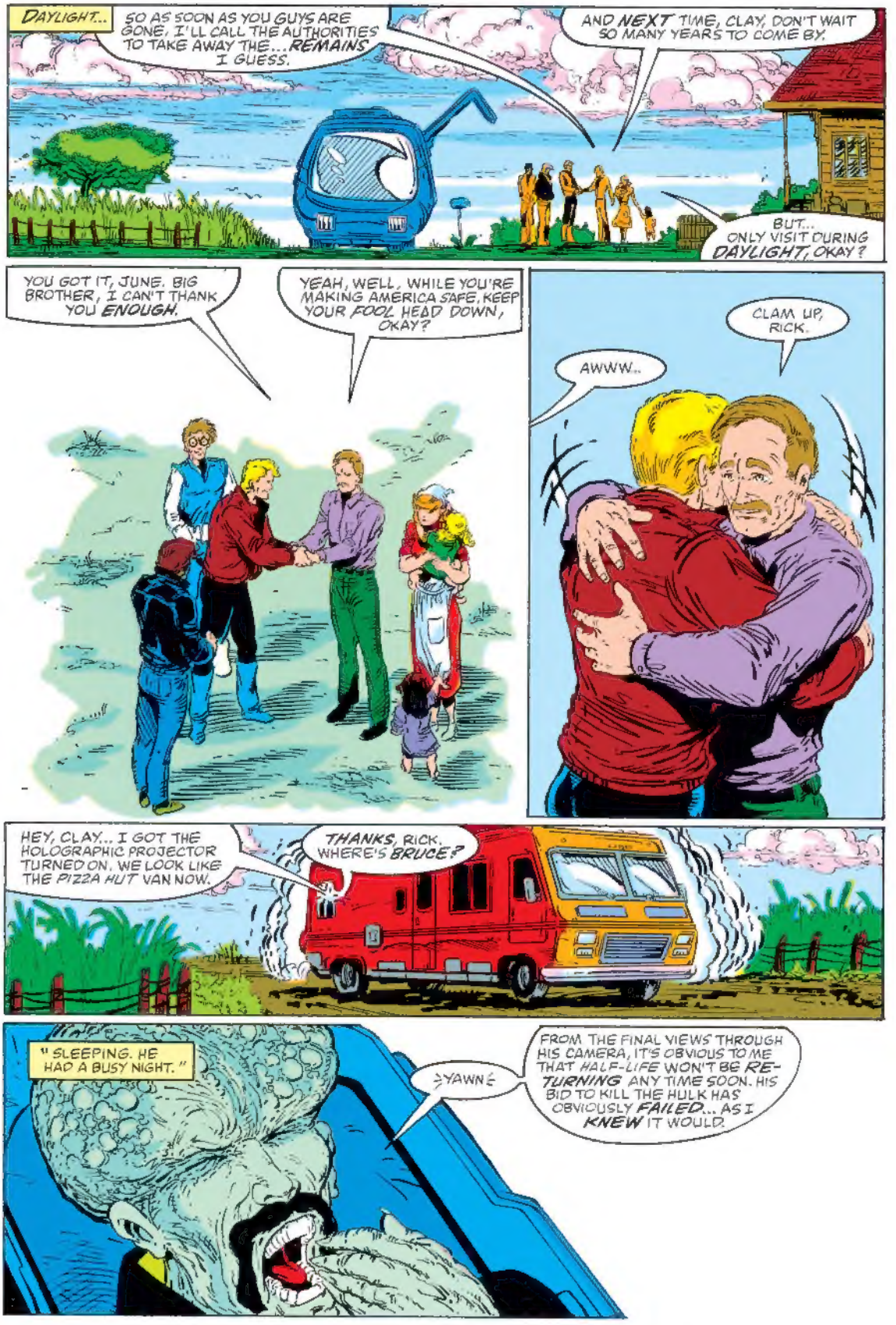
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I *DON'T* HATE BANNER

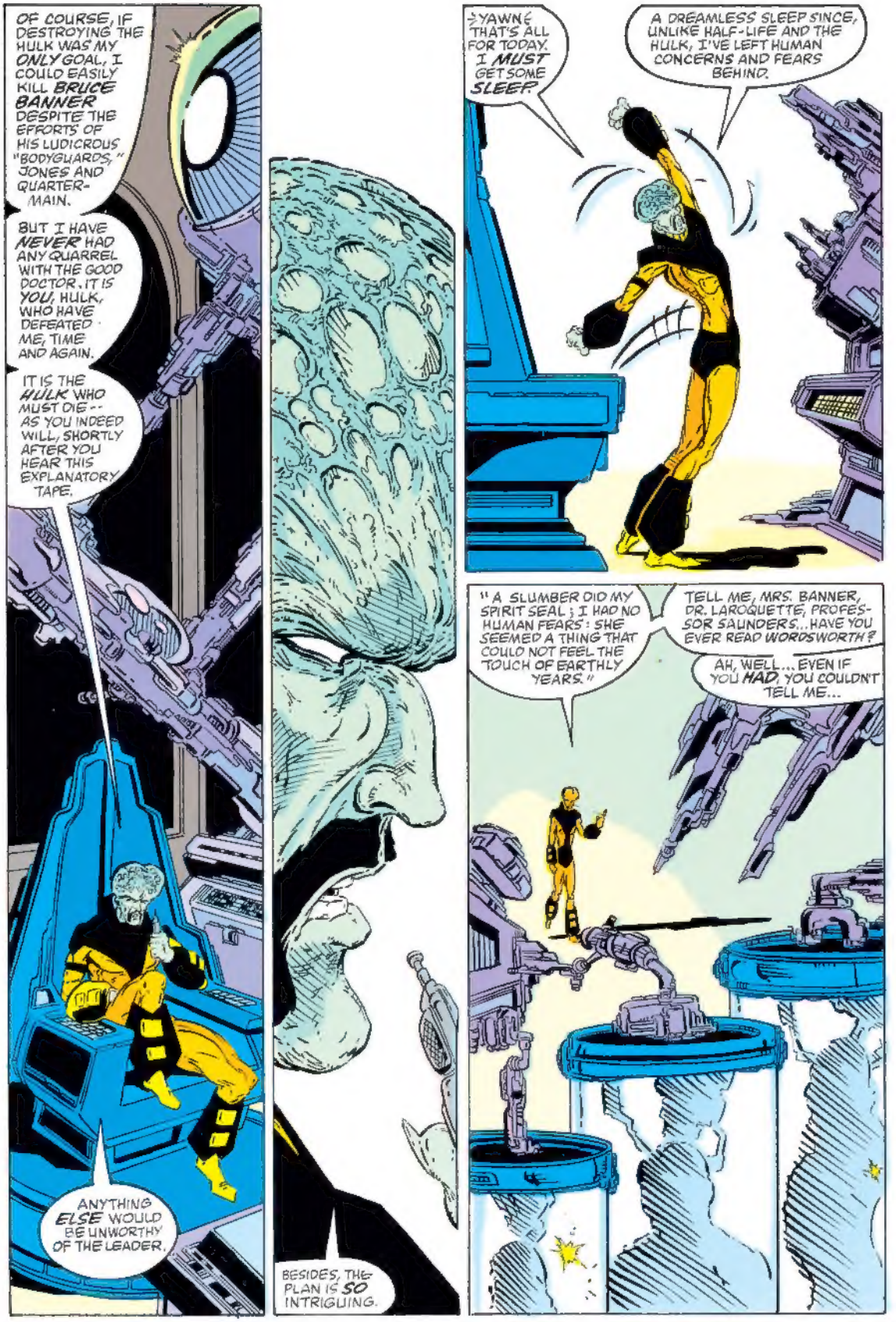
I *PITY* HIM

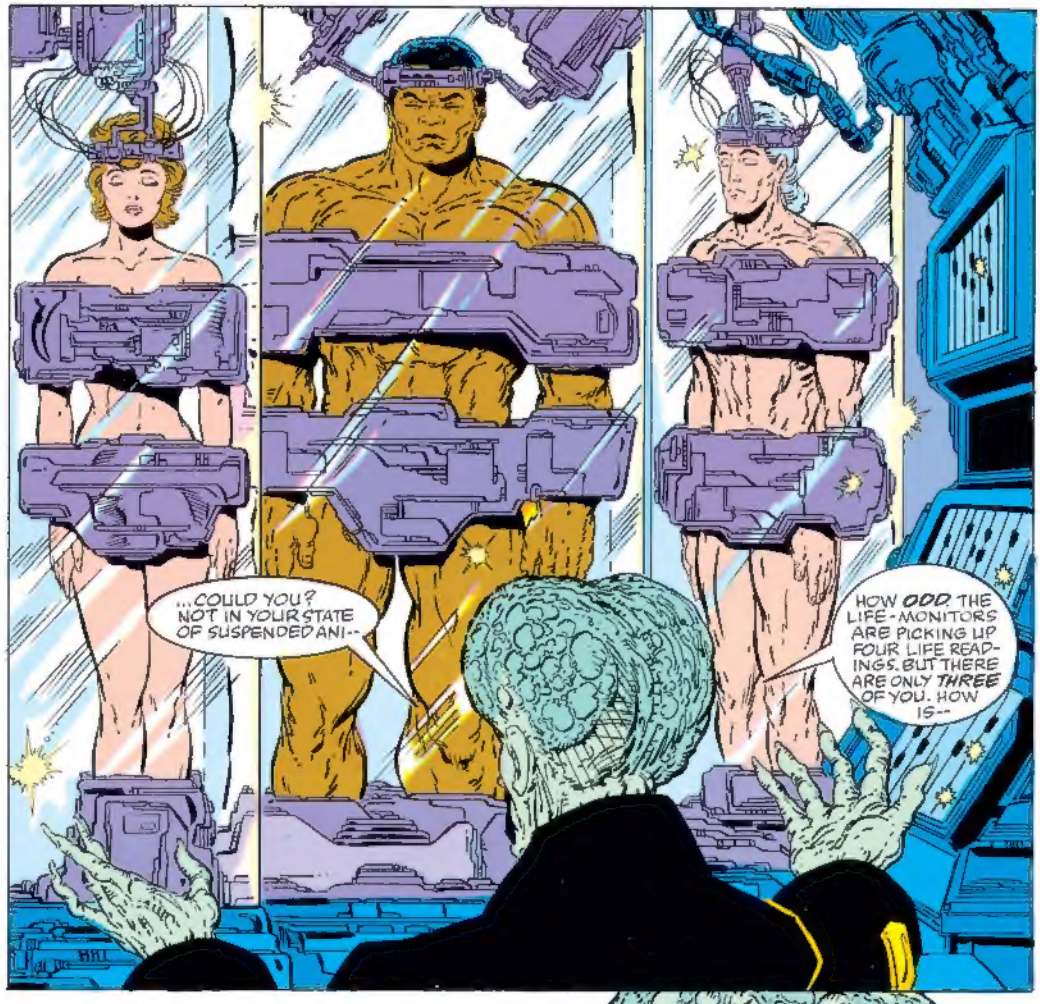
AND WHEN YOU DIE, I'LL BE HUMAN AGAIN! I CAN GO HOME TO BARBARA!
I CAN PICK UP THE SHARDS OF MY LIFE START OVER AGAIN!
BE A TEACHER! GO TO THE DEAN'S TEAS.
I CAN BE TONY MASTERSON AGAIN! AND YOU...
-- YOUR HUMAN HALF MADE ME LIKE THIS HOW BEAUTIFULLY IRONIC THAT YOUR DEATH WILL RESTORE ME TO WHAT I WAS
LISTEN CAREFULLY, HULK! DEATH'S HOOVES APPROACH!
HULK!
STAY BACK, JONES. HE'S M M.NE.
"HERE A SHEER HULK LIES POOR TOM BOWLING, THE DARLING OF OUR CREW, NO MORE HE'LL HEAR THE TEMPEST HOWLING, FOR DEATH HAS BROACHED HIM TO."
YOU NEVER QUIT DO YA? STILL ACT LIKE A TEACHER TOSSIN' QUOTES AROUND
YOU WANT ME TO ADMIT I'M AFRAID OF DYING? FINE. THE WHOLE REASON I HATE BANNER 'CAUSE I'M AFRAID HE MIGHT FIND SOME WAY TO GET RID OF ME
BUT IF THIS IS IT FOR ME... I'M NOT GOING OUT WHIMPERING. I WON'T BEG FOR LIFE. BUT YOU... YOU'LL BE BEGGING FOR DEATH


I.. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
DON'T YOU? YOU'RE LIVIN IN A DREAM WORLD, "TONY." YOU REALLY THINK IT CAN JUST... START OVER?
YOU'LL JUST SPEND YOUR DAYS TERRIFYIN' PEOPLE... AND WAITING FOR THE ENERGY YOU'VE STOLEN TO WEAR OFF SO YOU'LL BE LIKE YOU WERE... OR EVEN WORSE.
IF DEATH IS HERE FOR ME... I'M NOT AFRAID. BUT YOU.. YOU'RE GOING TO BE AFRAID OF LIVING.
GOING DAY IN, DAY OUT... AFRAID OF BEING WHAT I WAS?
DETERIORATING INTO THAT...THAT WEAK, WRETCHED BODY?
HOW.. HOW CAN I LIVE LIKE THAT?
I DID IT ALL THE TIME NOW IT'S YOUR PROBLEM!
NO!! I DON'T WANT THAT!
IT'S YOURS ANYWAY
NOOO!


FRAKAM
HULK! WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE'S HALF-LIFE?
OH.
HIM.
HE JUST LET HIM-SELF GO.


DAYLIGHT...
SO AS SOON AS YOU GUYS ARE GONE, I'LL CALL THE AUTHORITIES TO TAKE AWAY THE... REMAINS. I GUESS.
AND NEXT TIME, CLAY, DON'T WAIT SO MANY YEARS TO COME BY.
BUT... ONLY VISIT DURING DAYLIGHT, OKAY?
YOU GOT IT, JUNE. BIG BROTHER, I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.
YEAH, WELL, WHILE YOU'RE MAKING AMERICA SAFE, KEEP YOUR FOOL HEAD DOWN, OKAY?
AWWW...
CLAM UP, RICK.
HEY, CLAY... I GOT THE HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTOR TURNED ON. WE LOOK LIKE THE PIZZA HUT VAN NOW.
THANKS, RICK. WHERE'S BRUCE?
" SLEEPING. HE HAD A BUSY NIGHT. "
}YAWN{
FROM THE FINAL VIEWS THROUGH HIS CAMERA, IT'S OBVIOUS TO ME THAT HALF-LIFE WON'T BE RE-TURNING ANY TIME SOON. HIS BID TO KILL THE HULK HAS OBVIOUSLY FAILED... AS I KNEW IT WOULD.


OF COURSE, IF DESTROYING THE HULK WAS MY ONLY GOAL, I COULD EASILY KILL BRUCE BANNER DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF HIS LUDICROUS "BODYGUARDS," JONES AND QUARTERMAIN.
BUT I HAVE NEVER HAD ANY QUARREL WITH THE GOOD DOCTOR. IT IS YOU, HULK, WHO HAVE DEFEATED ME, TIME AND AGAIN.
IT IS THE HULK WHO MUST DIE -- AS YOU INDEED WILL, SHORTLY AFTER YOU HEAR THIS EXPLANATORY TAPE.
ANYTHING ELSE WOULD BE UNWORTHY OF THE LEADER.
BESIDES, THE PLAN IS SO INTRIGUING.
≥YAWN≤ THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY. I MUST GET SOME SLEEP.
A DREAMLESS SLEEP SINCE, UNLIKE HALF-LIFE AND THE HULK, I'VE LEFT HUMAN CONCERNS AND FEARS BEHIND.
"A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL; I HAD NO HUMAN FEARS: SHE SEEMED A THING THAT COULD NOT FEEL THE TOUCH OF EARTHLY YEARS."
TELL ME, MRS. BANNER, DR. LAROQUETTE, PROFESSOR SAUNDERS... HAVE YOU EVER READ WORDSWORTH?
AH, WELL... EVEN IF YOU HAD, YOU COULDN'T TELL ME...


...COULD YOU? NOT IN YOUR STATE OF SUSPENDED ANI--
HOW ODD. THE LIFE-MONITORS ARE PICKING UP FOUR LIFE READINGS. BUT THERE ARE ONLY THREE OF YOU. HOW IS--

NEXT **TOTALLY ARTIFICIAL**